

**Rep. Frank A. LoBiondo (NJ-02) Member Initiative Testimony**

Atlantic City Air National Guard Base (177<sup>th</sup> FW) Military Construction Priority:

Chairman Dent, Ranking Member Wasserman-Schultz, Members of the Subcommittee,

I am here today to advocate for an increase in the Air National Guard's military construction account, which funds projects that contribute to the defense of our nation and are important to the constituents of New Jersey's 2<sup>nd</sup> Congressional District.

I am asking this subcommittee to consider increasing funding for unspecified minor military construction projects at Air National Guard bases around the country. For example, one of the minor construction projects that could benefit from this account being increased is the Warren Grove Gunnery Range's Control Tower. Fighter jets, including A-10s and F-16s from East Coast Air National Guard units and those at the 177<sup>th</sup> Fighter Wing, use the area for practice bombing and strafing. Warren Grove is the largest Air National Guard range in the United States.

The current range control tower there is more than 40 years old and does not meet the standards for safe range operations. The existing structural steel is highly corroded, including the steps used to enter/exit the control room 65 feet above ground. The control room also has leaks near the electrical/alarm panels, causing a safety hazard. The existing communication room is located at the base of the tower and houses expensive communication equipment, but is not properly environmentally controlled. Finally, controllers are required to have 360 degree visibility the entire time aircraft are on the range, which they do not currently have. Upgrades to Air Guard range control towers such as the one at Warren Grove have been needed for many years, which the subcommittee has recognized in the past.

In addition to Airmen safety, Air Guard military construction projects can enhance range capabilities. This capability could positively affect future basing decisions for fifth-generation fighters such as the F-35. I also want to note that elements of the Air Guard, including the 177<sup>th</sup> Fighter Wing, play a critical role in both the Air Combat Command's Aerospace Expeditionary Force structure and NORAD's Air Force Aerospace Control Alert mission. At NORAD's command, the jets of the 177<sup>th</sup> Fighter Wing can be over New York and Washington simultaneously in under 10 minutes to protect our homeland. Given the growing capabilities of the United States' adversaries, the homeland defense mission has seen an increased emphasis lately and is truly indispensable.

I have a letter from the New Jersey TAG indicating the range tower upgrades as a top state priority in FY18, which I wish to add to the record. It is clear there is an urgent need for action sooner rather than later on Air National Guard construction projects critical to homeland defense such as Warren Grove Gunnery Range's Control Tower.

I respectfully request the members of this subcommittee add additional funding to the Air National Guard's unspecified minor military construction account this coming fiscal year. Thank you.



14 February 2017

Honorable Frank LoBiondo  
Member, US House of Representatives  
5914 Main Street  
Mays Landing, NJ 08330

Dear Congressman LoBiondo:

As the Adjutant General of the State of New Jersey, I would like to ask for your support for our number one priority, a new control tower at the Warren Grove Range. The replacement of the Warren Grove Range tower is critical to support the current mission as well as any developing 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> generation fighter aircraft missions. The current tower is undersized, cannot meet current mission security requirements, is past its programmed lifecycle and has fallen into disrepair. In addition, a facility inspection showed that corrosion was found on the existing tower superstructure which, combined with the security requirements, equipment space and normal building lifecycle costs, has been determined that replacement is the preferred course of action.

If timely action is not taken to replace the current tower, it will inevitably be deemed unsafe to occupy due to the previous unaddressed corrosion issues. If the Warren Grove Range cannot operate from the main tower, the unit will not be able to provide mission training to aircraft. This will have a significant impact on the three Air National Guard Fighter Wings (177FW / 113FW / 175FW) that use the Warren Grove Range as their Primary Training Range and halt the support of any future missions.

Sincerely,

MICHAEL L. CUNNIFF  
Brigadier General, NJANG  
The Adjutant General